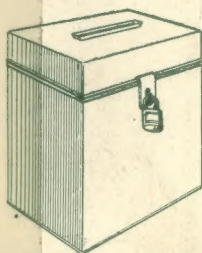


CAN A CHRISTIAN VOTE FOR CAPITALISM?

By
WILLIAM IRVINE, M.P.

Foreword by
REV. SALEM G. BLAND, D.D.



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By WILLIAM IRVINE, M.P.

Foreword by Rev. Salem G. Bland, D.D.

LABOUR PUBLISHING COMPANY
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Foreword

By REV. SALEM G. BLAND, D.D.

I HAVE followed the career of the author of this pamphlet ever since the pleasant days when I was teaching theology in Wesley College, Winnipeg, and owing to the cordial co-operation between Wesley and Manitoba College, Mr. Irvine, a Presbyterian student in theology, was a member of some of my classes. I noted then his marked and intelligent interest in the need of radical social reconstruction, by no means so generally recognized nearly a quarter of a century ago as today, and I formed expectations of him in this respect which he is notably fulfilling.

This pamphlet demonstrates that Mr. Irvine has made one of the most vital discoveries mankind in its progress from savagery to the Kingdom of God has made, and which it seems, in the Providence of God, to be the special mission of this generation to develop. That is the discovery that Christianity and the present economic system are as essentially and incurably incompatible as ever were Christianity and slavery, and that one or the other of them must go.

The question Mr. Irvine discusses is the supreme question facing Canada today. Until the present competitive, profit-motivated system is replaced by a co-operative system in which service is the incentive, unemployment, exploitation and unrest will continue. I cherish the hope that our young and adventurous country may be the first to bring in a Co-operative Commonwealth by the spreading of a Christian conscience.

This frank, reasonable and courteous discussion will, I believe, materially help to that end, and I hope that it will find a great host of readers.

S. G. BLAND.

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Can A Christian Vote for Capitalism?

THERE may be Capitalists who believe and say that they are Christians, there may be those among them who liberally endow churches and universities, and who donate large sums to foreign missions; some of them may even attempt to argue that the philosophy of Capitalism is compatible with theology, and attend church regularly; but none of these things has any bearing upon the question, "Can a Christian Vote for Capitalism?" These trappings of religious show and ceremony, however sincerely performed, are but the "Lord! Lord!" plea which does not vouchsafe entrance into the Kingdom. The question as to the Christian or unchristian character of Capitalism is not one of speculation, nor of belief in this or that doctrine,—not one of protestation nor of declared ideals, but one of actual fruits. What has Capitalism done to the bodies, minds and souls of men? The system must stand as being Christian or fall as unchristian by that test.

Progress not due to the System

It is of course true that the period of history dating from the beginning of the Capitalistic system to the present, has been in some notable respects the most progressive of all time. In scientific discovery, in mechanical invention and technical skill and knowledge, in means of transportation and communication, and in industrial progress as well as in medical science and education, the race moved forward rapidly. These achievements are often quoted by defenders of the present order and attributed to some genius inherent in the Capitalist system. Even if such were the case it would not be relevant to the inquiry into the Christian character of that system.

Nevertheless, it is perhaps as well to point out that the era of progress referred to above is attributable to the genius of man himself and not to the economic system which happened to be in vogue at the time of its occurrence.

Individualism and the competitive spirit which the system has exalted to heights of virtue, and which are supposed to have spurred the advance during the industrial period do not belong to Capitalism either. The inquisitiveness which led to discoveries, the creative instinct which resulted in invention are behaviourisms of man and are likely to remain with him, while initiative and the desire to overcome competitors which are supposed to stimulate progress, are the habits of animals, and are indispensable to all living beings who are faced with the danger of a scarcity of life's necessities, and who have no ethics to arbitrate save the strongest arm or the deepest cunning. If these instinctive habits of the primitive man have added anything to the great achievements of the last two centuries, they most certainly have stood in the way of man's social and ethical advance always, and in recent years have blocked the development of industry and invention where they were supposed to be indispensable. It is fair to say that the progress of recent centuries has been due to the genius of man himself, and that it took place in large measure in spite of and not because of Capitalism.

"By Its Fruits"

To judge a tree by its fruits is thoroughly scientific and practical. What are some of the fruits of Capitalism? Its good fruits have been on exhibition to an elaborate and universal extent. Technical skill and industrial organization are perhaps among its most valuable fruits. In short, Capitalism has effected a most efficient producing machine, which might have been of inestimable service to man but is not. If that fruit is good by all

means let us preserve it, but good though it is, it would be better to do away with it than to keep it, if in order to keep it we must endure all the bitter fruits of the system as well. Capitalism puts Capital—material wealth—in the honoured position. It comes before man himself. Man's interests must be subservient to capital. The well-being of capital dictates the policies of Government, the hours of labour, and the conditions under which people work, the income of the individual, the comfort of the home, the social institutions and the opportunity afforded for people to live. Capital is the dictator always, whether its mouthpiece be a Liberal or a Conservative leader, a Mussolini, or a Hitler. If the facilities so amply provided by Capitalism are to be preserved and used for the good of mankind, Capitalism will have to go, for under the policy of "Capital first" people cannot be served; human interests are freely and even ruthlessly sacrificed to the greed for wealth, and this is beyond question contrary to both the spirit and ethics of the Christian teaching.

Does Not Fulfill Purpose

The purpose of an economic system is to serve mankind. Not only must it produce all the requirements of civilized life, but it must distribute them to the consumer. If it produces without distribution, the primary object of the system has been defeated, and the system devised by man to serve him has made a fool of him. But there is a secondary or ultimate object of equal importance, and that is the preservation of man himself during these mechanical processes. The means must not defeat the end. To produce abundantly, and even to distribute adequately, is all very well and proper, but if it is done at a wage and under conditions which undermine the health and comfort of the people engaged in industry even to the extent of killing, maiming for life, and in depriving many of that education, comfort, assurance of

income, self-development, happiness and social harmony which alone can make life worth living, then the system fails to fulfill the purposes for which it exists. Surely no intelligent person will disagree with the foregoing principle. Then it follows that, if the present economic system, while being an excellent productive mechanism, has failed not only to distribute the products to the people, but crushed the very life out of them by the means adopted in production it must be abandoned. The question then to be met at once is, how has Capitalism treated people — men, women and children? In other words, what are the fruits which it yields to mankind?

The Fear of Want

Very properly we mention first the *fear of want*. In a competitive system the ethics of the most cunning and ruthless must be adopted by all who desire to have even a chance to survive. Just as when Germany introduced poison gas on the battlefield, the allied armies had to do the same or suffer defeat regardless of their aversion to its adoption as a means of warfare, so the employer who can get workers to accept the lowest wages, work the longest hours, and who can maintain the output by employing the fewest men has the best chance to make the largest profit and survive the longest, and his practices become general. Uncertainty chills the heart of every worker. Paralyzing fear is present night and day; fear that the body growing older will not be able to hold the pace and a younger man will be taken instead, fear that a new machine will cause many to be thrown out of work with prospects of want for the family. And this fear is not limited to the poor,—it is the night-mare of the wealthy as well. For there is no amount of wealth that can give anyone absolute security, since someone equally wealthy may achieve the overthrow of his wealthy competitor in the endless struggle for profit. This fear spurs the rich to still more ruthless methods and fear of want

is further intensified amongst all classes. This fear is a bitter and poisonous fruit and must be reaped if the tree which produces it continues to grow. A people constantly afraid cannot be happy. Life becomes a misery and the poison of this fruit of fear is a secondary cause at least of the most vicious and repulsive crime of the individual. The fear of want is so universal, persistent and inevitable as to constitute a menace second only to actual want.

Actual Want

To an ever increasing number of our people actual want is a serious and regrettable fact. One and one-quarter million of people in Canada are so much in want at the time of writing that they are in receipt of doles from the State, and corresponding numbers are similarly situated in all the capitalistic countries of the world. That people cannot be in want and still achieve the best that nature and God intended they should, needs no argument, and the system which prevents, either through fear of want or actual want, the population of the nation from being its best both individually and collectively, cannot be Christian.

Foolishness is another of the most abundant fruits of the system. If our people were in want because of actual scarcity we might find ethical compensations by meeting the inevitable with courageous stoicism. But when people are compelled to starve in the midst of an abundance produced by their own labour, the folly is so great as to render the situation intolerable. An economic system which produces too much and then destroys the goods it has produced while the people starve, is too obviously foolish to command the support of a Christian people, for that which is foolish is not Christian.

Exalts the Lowest in Man

Two more of the fruits of the system will be sufficient to mention here, although this brief survey is not by any

means comprehensive. The spirit of competition held by the defenders of Capitalism to be indispensable to the system, as well as the character which a life of competition develops in every individual is the very antithesis of the Christian spirit. Acquisitiveness and the cunning and skill necessary to be successful are the chief contributions to character which the system offers. Take a look at the Stock Exchange when either the Bull or the Bear is rampant. Is not that a scene more befitting savagery than a Christian civilization? Would the Son of Man find in that mad, ruthless scramble a place to lay his head? Capitalism exalts the lowest, while it tends to crush all the noblest and most divine impulses of human nature.

War

But the bitterest of all the fruits of Capitalism are gathered on the battlefields of the world. A protracted existence in misery or premature death is a constant result of Capitalism in its national sphere to vast multitudes of people in all countries. War, however, is the culmination of the system's struggle in the international field. Could any conceivable savage performance be more diabolically inhuman than a modern war? To gain markets or territory the bodies and souls of men are sacrificed to Mars with insane abandon. All the mechanical genius, the technical skill and the scientific knowledge to which the race is heir are used to the utmost limit in the destruction of human life, nay more, by a subtle sophistry the Christian churches of all lands have pleaded with men in the name of God to enlist in an army to kill their fellows. Has there ever been proposed anything more monstrous or sacrilegious, or which did more to rob man of his respect for religious teaching than the succumbing of the Christian church to the bloody and inhuman deeds of Capitalism?

"Lest We Forget"

Pageants and memorials of the Great War are being used "lest we forget". Someone should produce a pageant showing the Christians of Germany urging their fellow citizens to fight the Christians of France, and Christians of France urging Frenchmen to fight to the death the Christians of Germany, and Christians of Canada, of the United States of America and of Great Britain en masse to slay the Christians of Austria and Germany, and all in the name of Christ. That is something which it would pay the world well to remember. For while these nations fought each other in the name of Christ, they were all absolutely united in the whole-souled worship of Mars.

Capitalism Ethically Indefensible

Christianity, if it is to retain the respect of even wicked men, must stand for decent social conduct. How can praises to God, rising through a church spire overlooking a slum, ever reach Him? What damnable sacrilege, what utter infidelity to claim that Christ can be served by butchering our fellows as was done in the name of Christ by Capitalism from 1914 to 1918!

The impossibility of defending Capitalism on Christian grounds was recognized by the clergy many generations ago. Desiring, however, to avoid a clash with the powerful beneficiaries of Capitalism, Christian leaders, perhaps with the best of motives, escaped the issue by declaring and preaching that religion had no part to play in politics or economics. The phrase, "keep religion out of politics" became popular, and religion became a thing for the "next" world and had nothing to offer for this one.

Having thus excluded Christianity from the field of economics and politics, the church left for itself a very insignificant role indeed. For it was in these social fields that the people worked, lived and died. The result was that the influence of the church waned and the people's

interest in it became perfunctory rather than vital,—other-worldly rather than this-worldly, and doctrinaire rather than practical.

Church Changed View

The crisis came to the church when during the world war her pulpits became recruiting offices for the carrying on of the most brutally inhuman and unchristian holocaust of all time. The great majority of the ministry were reluctant to play roustabout to war lords, but it was too late to turn back. They had neglected economics and politics for generations, the Great War was the result of that neglect, and they decided to see it through. It was a sorry lesson, but a beneficial one. No sooner was the war over than church leaders everywhere began to take the position that if Christianity is going to be of any service to mankind in this world, it must insist that national and international policy be directed in accordance with Christian principles so that such an inhuman thing as a war, or starving multitudes of unemployed shall never happen again. That determination took deep root and grew rapidly and in due course bore fruit in the stand taken by many branches of the church on behalf of a Christian social order.

In the summer of 1933 at Toronto the representatives of the United Church in conference assembled, virtually declared that the Capitalist system was unchristian. Various encyclicals of the Catholic Church are quite as definitely outspoken, while other branches of the church have similarly expressed themselves. These are epoch-making utterances. The immediate result may be that rich people will withhold their support from the churches, and that many of the clergy will come to the economic status of the unemployed. Even so, they will be happier and nobler men there, and albeit closer followers of their Master than they would be were they to refrain from de-

nouncing an unchristian system and collect their salaries for so refraining.

Will they refrain? Are they not men of vision and courage, who have had their lesson? Will they shirk their responsibilities or swerve from the path which it has marked out for them? Surely not. Here is the opportunity of an age for the church to give leadership in the greatest spiritual and ethical advance ever contemplated.

Religion and Economics

Except in the minds of people of profound ignorance, religion and ethics cannot be separated from economics and politics. It is in the field of industry, in political policy and in our social institutions that we find a workshop in which we actually make our characters. The religion or the ethical principle which a man can afford to leave out of his business or out of an act of parliament can well afford to be left out of everything. The ethical principles usually associated with religion, but divorced from economics and politics, are of very great importance. Just as a string running through a number of beads makes a necklace of them, so an ethical principle should run through every social institution like a golden thread of worthy purpose, giving unity and meaning to the life of the community.

There is a new "right" and a new "wrong". All the old "wrongs" may still be wrongs to be avoided, but some of the old "rights" have become new wrongs. The founder of Christian ethics declared that the object of his mission was that we "might have life and have it more abundantly." Surely, then, Christians will not object to a code of ethics based on abundant life. On such a basis it is "wrong" to perform any act, or condone any practice which does violence to life, and it is "right" to perform any act or to support any policy or practice which makes for fuller, freer and more abundant life. Ethics may be more, but cannot be less than that.

Ethics cannot be separated from Christianity in its social implications. A person may be ethical without being a Christian, of course, but he cannot be truly Christian without being ethical. In making the furtherance of human life in all its phases the test of ethical practice the individual will to a lesser degree be subjected to the errors of conscience. For in that case the direct effect of action either upon our lives or the lives of others would be a matter capable of demonstration and proof, and ethics would become a science of human relations and of getting the highest and best and most out of life.

Religion and the Human Body

Christianity translated into social life in such a manner that it would influence the whole life, in fact, become the environment of the individual without as well as his inspiration and power within, would tend to make out of every person the very best human being of which his potentialities were capable. It would begin with the best possible care of the physical body. Practices which harm the human body would be wrong, since the impairment of the body would harm life. It is to our advantage, personal and collective, to protect the body from every danger and to know and practice the laws of health that our bodies may render to life the greatest possible service. Hence, food, clothing and shelter, proper hygiene, etc., are indispensable to Christian practice, and every act or policy, political or of any other sort which affects these matters, must have great significance to all who call themselves Christians.

Religion and the Mind

The same applies to the mind. A healthy mind can yield even more to life than a healthy body and when both are healthy we have great assets for living. The first essential of a healthy and vigorous mind is confidence in truth itself. Those who are afraid of new ideas

are the infidels of today. The Christian surely desires truth for its own sake, no matter if it should mean the uprooting of the most cherished belief. Having faith in truth, the mind is liberated from fear and is hospitable to new ideas. What would you think of a Christian truth which required the protection of a statute?

Things are not true because people say them, nor are they false when people are prevented from saying them. If what people say is false, time will demonstrate the error; if what they say is true, we want to hear what they have to say. In other words, anything which restricts the mind is the enemy of truth and the enemy of truth is the enemy of life.

There is also what is known as a spiritual life, which I regard as depending almost entirely upon a man's relations with himself. Shakespeare expounded this phase of Christian ethics when he said— "To thine own self be true and it must follow as the night the day: thou canst not then be false to any man".

Capitalism Disregards Humanity

One highly important sphere of Christian practice, and the one which has been almost entirely neglected, is that which has to do with human relationships in the home and factory, in church and the state, in business and politics, in the immediate community, within the nation and among all the nations of the world. The present economic system violates the very spirit of ethics in each field to which I have referred. Capitalism does not care for nor protect the bodies of our people. It huddles them together in slums, starves them, subjects them to disease and destroys them in war; it treats the mind quite as badly, for since Capitalism is based on privilege backed by force it might jeopardize the system were students to tell the truth about it; hence Section 98, and other restrictions to mental freedom. Spiritually, it works havoc when it compels a man to smother his own soul by disregarding

his own convictions and voting for his party; and in the relationships of groups, classes, or nations the final arbiter in Capitalist ethics is the bayonet and the bomb, the machine gun and the dreadnought.

Is Capitalism as we know it an expression in any real sense of Christian ethics? If there are leaders of the Christian church who seek to identify Capitalism with Christian principles, then upon their own heads be the responsibility. Capitalism is anti-Christian, and let its defenders accept the challenge to justify life under that system on the basis of Christian ethics.

Are These Christian?

Is the profit aim of industry Christian? Is the bestial competition of which the grain exchange and the stock exchange are realistic examples, sound Christian practice? Is it Christian for those who have power, to use it in extracting for themselves certain privileges at the expense of the needy many? Is it Christian to maintain multitudes in constant fear of want when abundance for all is a possibility? Is it Christian for a few people who have money to buy all the machines of production and then to refuse work to the masses and deny them a share of the goods produced by the machines? Is it right for the state to extract as taxes from the parents of starving children toll for bondholders who already have more than they can use? Is it Christian to build battleships for the purposes of destruction when multitudes of people have no real homes of their own? Is sound money sound Christianity? Is it Christian to slaughter millions of people in a modern war in a Capitalistic struggle for profit and power? Is there any phase of the whole unholy system but would disgrace every known Christian principle?

Where is he who in the name of Christianity will come out openly in opposition to justice in the matters of natural resources, banking, and the production and distri-

bution of wealth? Where is he who, standing for Christian ethics, will openly support Capitalism? Or where is he who will defend Capitalism with its competitive struggle in which force and cunning take the place of morality and which results in poverty for the masses and international bloodshed? And who will defend it in the name of the Carpenter of Nazareth?

Ethics of Savagery

Capitalism took its rise in savagery, and is still savage both in theory and practice. The economic and political policies followed today are based upon certain principles which were formulated in pre-industrial times when scarcity and strict individualism prevailed. Since then, and covering a period of centuries, those great events which are the highest peaks in the mountain range of history have changed every factor of the problem. The natural growth of the human mind in keeping with evolutionary processes, assisted by the democratizing of education, the scientific discoveries which gave us a new world and prepared the way for the application of scientific principles to production, the magic mechanical inventions resulting in industrialization which profoundly altered every human relationship, these together brought us from the crude and rugged individualism of the savage to the interdependence of a socialized society.

The Fact of Social Unity

Today man's social unity—not his individualism—is the first that strikes the eye when viewing the modern picture. Individuals have become interdependent in a society which has become social in all its aspects in spite of the savage desire on the part of some to retain individualism. The failure to square our political policies with the facts of modern economics and the failure to adjust

our social institutions to the ethical requirements of an interdependent society account in large measure for the present difficulties of the human race.

These ethical implications are not merely a convenient sentimentalism. They are on the contrary natural and fundamental to the objective to be sought as well as to the methods to be employed in the achievement of an abundant life. In other words, ethical objectives and methods must be adopted, not because of sentimental desires to be good after the manner of some abstract idea of conduct, but because only by ethical means can economic security be gained and held.

An Interdependent Society

For instance, under conditions of scarcity in primitive society, individualism and competition were the methods of existence. The strength of the individual's arm, the weight of his club, or the depth of his cunning were his armour and weapons against want and death. Under such conditions the weak perished and the strong and cunning survived. As civilization advanced individualism yielded to collectivism. Society became interdependent both nationally and internationally. This being the fact in our time, the individual no longer is able to solve his problem with a club. On the contrary, he finds that in modern society the individual can obtain the best for himself only when society as a whole, and upon which he depends, is also getting the best.

Abundance has become the basis of a higher ethics than Capitalism knows. Two men might readily fight over a bottle of water in the Sahara desert, since life might depend on which one got it, but these two men would not fight over a bottle of water if they were on a boat in Lake Superior. Similarly, it is absurd for people to struggle with each other to the very death for a mere existence while in the very midst of an abundance greater than they can all consume. Abundance and interdependence make altruism a practical necessity.

Rugged Individualism

The only place where individualism can survive today is where it is protected by the force of the state. If the owners of gold mines, oil fields, banks, or water powers, etc., depended on their own "rugged individualism" about which they prate, some Jack Dempsey would punch them off their possessions, or some Al Capone would give them short shrift. But these gentlemen do not want any individualism as rugged as that, and to protect their individualism in possessions unethically secured they have passed laws which entitle them to the protection of the state.

The individual is well nigh helpless, contending by his own efforts against social evils. The individual farmer cannot raise the price of his wheat, nor can the industrial worker solve the unemployment problem for and by himself, yet the very lives of these men and their families depend upon prices and wages. Many of these individual problems require social solutions in a civilized society, and every social problem, by virtue of being social, is necessarily ethical. This undeniable fact that social problems, because they are social, involve ethical principles, reveals at once the significance of social problems to those calling themselves Christians.

Surely it is time to protest against the slavery of mankind in body, mind and soul to economic conditions. We cannot deny that up to the present time in history economic forces have been predominant. Human actions have been the chips on the great ocean current of economic events. This is the truth which Marx discovered and which he regarded as the key to the interpretation of all history.

Economic Determinism

It was inevitable in the struggle for existence when the race was without knowledge and skill sufficient to enable them to produce enough to satisfy their material require-

ments, that most of their time and thought would be occupied in making a living, and it was natural too, at that time, that economic demands being as they were of first importance should cause the most concern.

That is, however, no longer really the situation. The fact of modern abundance of economic supplies should relieve the race of the necessity of blindly following the dictation of economic conditions. Economic forces cease to be deterministic the moment that economic demands are satisfied. If it be true that the problem of production has been solved and abundance can be made available to all, then that fact, if it is a fact, should sound the death knell of economic determinism. For want and the fear of want are what makes economics deterministic.

If we have put out the fear of want through abundance, economics lose deterministic power just as a boiler loses power when the fire is put out. As a fact during the scarcity period of history, as a fact under Capitalism, we cannot escape the truth of economic determinism, and it is a grim, cruel, brainless truth, but why that should be cherished as a philosophy of history when there is a chance to throw it overboard is difficult to understand.

Intelligent and Humane Determinism

Apparently economic determinism has always dealt unfairly with the masses. Under Slavery, Feudalism and Capitalism, the masses of the people have suffered greatly. If economic determinism is to continue under the Co-operative Commonwealth, then what assurance have we that the people will fare any better at its hands?

As a fact economic determinism must be acknowledged as containing much too much truth in the past and in the present. As a fact up to the present we accept it, but as a philosophy of life we repudiate it. Eating to live is of great importance, living to eat is animalism. The human soul is in rebellion against the restricting of life

within the compass of an economic limit which obtained only in the pre-industrial age of scarcity.

If all human action for all time is to be so determined, the race will cease to reproduce its kind and end human history on this planet as a colossal failure. Life must be more in the future than a fearful struggle merely to exist. Such a life reduces mankind to a lower level of suffering than the brute which probably has neither the knowledge nor the imagination to fear that its next meal may not be forthcoming.

With the resources and means of production now available for use and through planned social engineering our economic problems vanish, and with them will go the dominating power which they have hitherto exercised over history. Under a Co-operative Commonwealth economic power will be subordinated to other and more pleasant desires.

Live Rather Than Exist

As things are now, we are too much at the mercy of a merciless and crude economic force. Under its lash, we are all so busy struggling for a living that we have no time to live. Indeed, we have no time to devote to the real problems of life at all. If we were freed from the fear of want, and if human affairs were being intelligently directed to a worthy human end our tasks would be very different from what they now are. We would then be free to turn our attention to the art of living. Instead of hunting for a job as a starving animal prowls the forest, we would be considering the most advantageous and fruitful way of using our leisure; instead of ministering superficially and ineffectively to human suffering—mental and physical, which is of hereditary origin—we would be applying the biological principles, which we have already applied so successfully to cattle and hogs, in order that the race might be improved; instead of struggling under financial pressure to keep our schools open for a definite

period each year, we would be concerning ourselves with how to educate and what to educate for; instead of liquidating our bankrupt emotions in divorce courts we would be finding out how to love and marry without emotional disaster; instead of wasting our time trying to escape the inevitable effects of a cause we obstinately refuse to remove, we should be cultivating a taste for the beautiful and developing the arts; in short, instead of being so busy trying to exist that we have no time to live, we would be so engaged at actual living that we would have no time to waste on trying to exist.

Under economic determinism ethics have no place. It is the recognition of that fact which accounts for the denial, by some, of the economic determinism which Marx overemphasized. It is better and wiser for us to acknowledge the fact of economic determinism and proceed to alter it by solving our economic problem on the basis of abundance and thus depriving economics of its power over human action, than erroneously to deny the obvious.

The human race cannot really live while enslaved in economic bondage. To effect economic freedom, and thus take the future of history from the clutch of blind forces and commit our direction to intelligence is the greatest ethical undertaking of all time. Human relationships will then be determined by ethical principles under intelligent guidance and life and history will gain a purpose. To achieve this should be the task of the modern church.

A National Purpose

If it is ethical to free the human mind and body from the determining influence of blind, remorseless forces, it is equally moral to set an objective for society and history which will sum up human idealism. Let it be the acknowledged aim of our nation, above all else, to make human beings happy individually and collectively. Let human values take precedence over all else of an economic, business, social or political character.

To all such questions as "What is an economic system for? What are schools for? What is history for?" the answer should be that they are for humanity. All things must be subordinated to human personality. In a society the course of which is determined by economic forces as it is now, the constitution, profit on investment, bonds, imperialism and war are all given right-of-way before humanity. In a society guided by intelligence toward a human purpose, the highest happiness of mankind will be the pivotal idea.

Control or be Destroyed

Humanity must either control economic forces or be destroyed by them. Civilization has come to a point where it cannot go farther in the same direction without inviting disaster. These are times of fear and uncertainty. Indecision is the characteristic attitude of all in authority. Unrest and dangerous mob psychology such as result in Fascism grow apace while a senile statesmanship stands shivering with fear upon the shore of the greatest opportunity in all history. Slowly but surely the shadow of the hopelessness of the situation spreads over the mind of the times.

It is dangerous to halt, it is dangerous to go on, and the voice of a dead past calls for a retreat. But there can be no going back. The voice of the past may call us back but the drums of destiny never beat retreat. The voice of life, of progress, and of courage calls upon the children of men to go forward. Amidst the chaos and blindness and indecision there are those who still think they can get that tide in the affairs of men which, if taken at the flood, leads on to personal fortune. If, however, we are to launch out on the ocean of opportunity which now awaits our adventure, we must seek that tide which sets forever in the same direction, the gulf stream of human progress, running deep and strong below the

troubled surface of life's sea, toward a destiny worthy of the very best in mankind.

A Canadian Ideal

Canada as a nation needs an ideal which can sum up into one great purpose the highest and best which her people can think and be. At the moment Canada is going nowhere and suffering a great deal on the road. Nationally speaking, there is neither hope nor purpose to hold the nation on a steady course, and our great enthusiasms are reserved for such things as jazz, stock gambling, and sports. The thing that is lacking is a worthwhile purpose. Capitalism is incapable of supplying that purpose except by declaring war. For that reason, if for no other, it is no longer worthy of support. Surely Canadians who united so willingly on the common purpose of war in 1914 will unite even more readily on some noble constructive purpose such as economic security for every Canadian.

The ideal we require must be acceptable to the people to be of any use, and to be acceptable it must be vital enough to be interesting and lofty enough to make a person proud to follow it. The ideal must come down to where we are and reach up to where we want to go; it must square itself with knowledge and be practical, but it must reach down to the emotions and lift us through them above the clouds to the realms of imagination and dream; and it should at the same time awaken the social conscience and become the instinctive collective purpose.

There is a sharp clash between the individualistic idealism taught by parents and teachers and the facts of economic life. The antithesis is so great that they cannot go on together, and the sooner that is realized the better. Either the teaching of Christian idealism must be discontinued or it must be extended to the community and the nation. The idealism of the individual is of the cloister, exotic, impractical and disappointing, while so-

cially there is no ideal at all except that of the jungle—a grim, cruel and soulless struggle.

If social life is to be continued as a battle-ground, it would certainly be more logical, and perhaps even advisable, to teach our children to be ruthless rather than forgiving, and to fight rather than to love their neighbour. For to continue as we are now going is fatal to idealism and detrimental to the individual, since disillusionment must be swift, inevitable and crushing.

Christian versus Jungle Ethics

Can anything be more destructive of the ideal of a youth than the realization that his cherished principle not only has failed him, but has in reality unfitted him for the actual struggle into which he is perforce plunged. He would be a bold man who would advocate the scrapping of Christian idealism and a definite return to the brute philosophy of tooth and claw. At the same time, only sheer blindness can prevent us from seeing that it is the latter which wins out in the end. The young man leaves Sunday School, in which he has been taught by precept to love his neighbour, but he enters a jungle where his ideals are met with growls, with dripping fang, and deadly claw. After having been torn and wounded, he retires, bleeding, to curse those who misinformed him and to arm himself as best he can for survival. The shock to his emotions is terrific. He throws idealism to the winds as a fairy tale in the Santa Claus category. Or what perhaps is worse, he takes the view that an ideal is something to think of in a quiet, dull hour, but never to be worked for sincerely as the fulfillment of life. This is the chief reason for the devitalizing of religious experience; it explains why so many Sunday School students fail to find a place in the church. They have been sadly disillusioned by the realities of life of which they heard nothing in Sunday School.

The young man who, with a Sunday School ideal, enters business or industry is like a man who has bought

a ticket for Liverpool only to find when he has reached the open sea that the ship is bound for Hong Kong. He has been duped. He resents it deeply. A youth in the Stock Exchange, with a Sunday School ideal, is as out of place as Alice in Wonderland would have been in the palace after midnight—shabby, inadequate, and ashamed. No one can escape that shock today, and no soul can survive it without moral and spiritual disfigurement.

Capitalism Lacks Ethical Purpose

I do not argue that the ideal of Sunday School is at fault. The fault lies rather in the absence of a corresponding social ideal. In other words, if the individual passenger is to arrive, he must board a ship bound for the port to which he is going. Life has bestowed upon us a through ticket to happiness. We board the Capitalistic system filled with hope, to discover to our horror that the ship is not going there,—indeed, that it never had any intention of going there. We must then either go on to anarchy, immorality and inhumanity with the social system, or perish. To perish is contrary to the instincts of life, and so we go on through a miserable existence without even an apology to life.

The time has come when a choice must be made. We must either adopt a social system into which the Christian idealism of the individual can fit, or frankly revert to the animal plane and fight it out like tigers. What is wanted is a social system which is heading for that state of life where the individual at his best wants to be; with a purpose so noble as not to do violence to the best human feelings and desires. This purpose is lacking in a Capitalist society. It cannot be supplied under the system, for under individualism and competition there can neither be collective purpose nor altruism. Business and industry, stripped to fang and claw, cannot give this necessary purpose; politics based on competitive economics and in a constant struggle for power cannot supply it, neither

can nationalism and imperialism with their lust for conquest give this purpose. It is clearly the function of religious institutions to give the required social direction. This does not mean that a church must align itself with a particular political party; it means that the influence of the church for justice and righteousness should be so strong that a political party which ignored justice and righteousness would have no chance; that the social purpose of the church would be so clear as never to be in doubt, so sincerely upheld as to win respect, so noble as to command support.

Can a Christian Vote for Capitalism?

It surely follows that since the economic system is not Christian, as has been shown, the people who effect the practical working out of that system cannot be Christians either. To hold that Christians can build and maintain an unchristian social order and still be Christian is like saying that a man can perpetrate a bank robbery without being a thief.

Is the Bank Act a Christian Act? Was Beauharnois a Christian Act? Is any Act granting a monopoly a Christian Act? If these are not Christian Acts, how can the people who voted for them be Christian? The answer is that they are not. Every citizen must take responsibility for the sort of thing he votes for. He can't escape by saying that he is a Christian at home and at church but a savage when he goes into a polling booth.

There is nothing which more clearly demonstrates the surface character of religious life than the empty-headed, superficial cant of so-called Christian people who protest that politics is too impure to be mentioned in the pulpit on Sunday. What can be said for the practical religion of a man who votes year after year for a system which is so corrupt that he is ashamed to have it mentioned? Does he not realize that if politics is rotten, he made it so, and that, having produced a rotten political and social

system he is a rotten Christian and ought not to disgrace its sacred name by applying it to himself until he has made politics and business so humane and clean that they may also be appropriately called Christian?

Vote as you Pray

Canada is not a Christian nation. It holds to an economic system which makes it possible for a few to live in luxury while the masses are in want. We do not protest against anyone living in luxury, in fact, all may do that today, but a few people blinded to facts by greed actually either prevent the production of goods, or destroy them when they are produced, or prevent their distribution to people who are in want and who have a right to claim such goods.

Since Capitalism is not Christian, the nation which holds to it is not Christian, and the individuals who vote for an unchristian system are not Christian. "By their fruits ye shall know them." Is it not a tragic fact that after two thousand years of Christian teaching there is not one Christian city or community, not to speak of a nation, on earth? This fact is due to the erroneous belief prevailing until now, that it was possible to separate a man from the things by which he lived, that he could be a Christian by believing something without doing it, —in short, that a person could be a Christian while engaged every day in doing positively unchristian things.

Christians must "vote as they pray," to use a phrase of Mr. J. S. Woodsworth. They have been praying for generations—"Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," but they voted that His Kingdom should not come and the vote was more potent than the prayer. A story is told of a Conservative candidate in a Dominion election who was canvassing the Minister of a local church for his vote. "I'm sorry," said the Minister, "but I promised my vote to the Liberal candidate yesterday. But I'll tell you what I'll do,—I'll pray for you."

"Thank you, Sir," replied the Conservative, "but I do wish you would vote for me and pray for the Liberal."

The Appeal

Democracy involves able leadership and effective popular education. The appeal must not be limited to intellectualism. It must reach the people through every avenue which leads to the mainspring of collective action. The appeal must be made through the stomach, through the head, and through the heart.

People who think they are secure from an economic point of view will not respond on their own account to an appeal based on the fear of want; people who are hungry or who fear the possibility of seeing their families starve will not be attracted by a scientific analysis. While neither of these appeals must be overlooked, perhaps the appeal to the heart is at once the most universal and the most effective. A movement which has not an appeal to the world's heart, which has no idealism capable of raising the hope above the immediate task, will inevitably perish.

Great minds have lived long in human memory, but great hearts have become immortal. The Sermon on the Mount expresses great and beautiful thoughts, but its author is not remembered for having uttered them. for alas, few people know even yet what He meant by them. He is remembered rather for His divine generosity, as when He defended a harlot from those who would have stoned her to death, as when He visited the sick and fed the hungry, and was kind to little children; and most of all He is remembered for having yielded up His life rather than yield that principle of life by which all live. It is for these things that He is immortalized in the heart of the world. Just as people desire to follow Him, not because they understand all of His teachings, but because they feel something of what He felt, so the masses will come to a Christian social order because of their

sympathy with each other and because of their love of the best things which life has to offer.

To the question, "Can a Christian Vote for Capitalism?" I would therefore answer with an emphatic negative. I am convinced that the time has come for every Christian to face courageously the issues which have been raised by the developments of our time and to which I have referred in the preceding pages. His choice is between Capitalism and competitive chaos, on the one hand, and Christianity and Co-operation on the other. "Once to every man and nation Comes the moment to decide," and that decision will determine the fate of Christianity and, ultimately, the fate of the human race.

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